

Inspirations from The Noble Quran Ideas for Better Life...

Volume Three

Author

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‘La hawla wa la quwwata illa billah.’

(There is no power and no strength except with Allah)

I dedicate this humble contribution to our beloved

Prophet Muhammad ﷺ and then to all elders of
Alavi family



About the Book

Noble Quran is the last of the books revealed to mankind from their creator; it acknowledges the books revealed before it and conveys nothing but “true guidance” from the creator. The common message of Noble Quran and the books revealed before it was one: Monotheism, Day of Judgment, and Life hereafter.

Understanding and practicing the message of Noble Quran in the letter and spirit is a basic requirement to live a better life here and hereafter. I recited Noble Quran; learned covenants of faith, performed prayers and worshiped, gained knowledge about righteous (halal) and wrongs (haram). However, my dilemma continued. The more I learnt, my perspective filled with more contradictions and misnomers. As many of us do, I had this solution to live with compartmentized perspectives to gain consonance in my perceived conflicting pursuits in this life and the life hereafter. But by the will of Allah, I realized that I had another option: To revisit my daily life contradictions and misnomers by reflecting the wisdom of Noble Quran and Sunnah. I think having done so I have found harmony in my daily chores and my desire for a successful life hereafter.

This compilation contains short narratives, in which common misnomers and contradictions of our daily life are revisited for clarity in the context of Quranic verses and Sunnah (prophetic traditions), pbuh. In shall Allah, you will find this compilation useful to overcome your contradictions and replace misnomers with true sense. Thus, In Shaa Allah you will be able to set your directions and priorities in a more meaningful fashion.

Happy Reading, Sohailuddin ALAVI

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Clarity for Positivity

Allah says, in Sura Adh-Dhariyat [51:56], "And I (Allah) did not create the Jinns and the human beings except for the purpose that they should worship Me". Allah says in Sura Hud [11:6], "And no moving creature is there on earth but its provision is due [provided by] from Allah [in this life]". And in Sura An Najam [53:39-42], "And that man [woman] can have nothing but what he does [good or bad]; and his deeds will be seen; then he will be recompensed with a full and the best recompense". In Sura Takatur [102:1-3] Allah says, "The mutual competition [for pilling up of worldly things] diverts you [from worshiping Allah]; until reach to your grave; nay! You shall come to know". In Sura Al Humazah [104:2-4], Allah says, "Who has gathered [hoarded] wealth and counted it; he thinks that his wealth will make him live forever; nay! Verily he shall be thrown into crushing fire".

One can clearly understand that: -

- ✓ We are created to [struggle] worship [have faith on Allah and do righteous deeds] for succeeding in the life hereafter;
- ✓ Whereas Allah has already decreed to provide our provision in this life.

Having said this, we need to go forth seeking livelihood from halal [ethical] sources with a motivation to earn Allah's pleasure alone. Struggling for more of wealth will be in vain; at the end of the day we will not get more or less of what Allah has destined for us. Similarly hoarding of wealth such as not giving to the needy, sometimes not even spending on parents and family and finally investing in speculative assets to multiply the wealth without being put into productivity uses causes Allah's curse.

When We Fail to Believe; We Disbelieve

When we fail to recognize evidence to believe, then generally we turn to disbelief! Ignoring the fundamental principle that as belief needs evidence so does disbelief. Believing in the future [unseen] leads to positivity and cheerfulness, while disbelieving in the future [unseen] instills negativity and despondency. Belief provides us the purpose and builds courage we need to act positively while disbelief changes our courage into hopelessness and turn our principles into shallow rituals.

Allah says, in Sura Al Mutaaffifin [83: 1-6], "Woe to Al Mutaaffifin [cheaters]; and those who when they take by measure (or weight) from men, demand full measure; and when they have to give by measure [or weight] to other men, they give less than due; do they not think [disbelieve] that they will be resurrected [and questioned], on a Great day [Qiyama]".

In the above ayat it is clearly evident that those who disbelieve [without evidence] questioning of their illegitimate deeds on the Day of Judgment are the ones who discard the spirit of their principles and work with despondence: claiming more and giving less unjustly is a sign of greed for more and more, which in turn is manifestation of disbelieving [denying] i.e. hopelessness to get rewards in the hereafter so they seek more and more in this life only without regard to just or unjust ways, and denial of the questioning for illegitimate deeds on the great day and torment that would follow. The denial of day-of-judgment is rather mandatory to justify the hopelessness in the hereafter.

Living My Faith!

There was this man who always lived with a positive attitude. One fine morning he had a severe heart attack and was taken to the hospital. His life was saved but his heart was damaged beyond repair. Doctors' conclusion was that he had had several angina attacks in the past but he never believed that it could turn into a massive heart attack and so he never had any preventive treatment. Meaning he shall never regain his normal life again: He always worked with a positive attitude believing that nothing happened so far it means nothing will happen in future. He did not accept the signs nor believed on the Doctors, who used tell him that he can have an attack.

Often times, when we keep getting what we need in our present lives we believe not that future can be different. The result is we do not prepare nor make corrections until the future risk becomes a real problem. Then we are left with two options, to salvage or lose it. But if we accept the unseen much ahead before it turns real, our situation remains in our favor.

Allah Subhana hu Tala has sent numerous Prophets *pbut* and repeated his revelations unto mankind, again and again. HE the gracious warned that this life is nothing but a trial (Sura Mulk Verse 2), and that there shall be a Day of Judgment, when each person will be questioned of how he had lived his life in this world and then he will be sent to heaven or hell. Those who have faith on Allah, HIS prophets *pbut*; and, revelations accept it and live their lives with a right focus but those who refuse to accept the unseen live their lives as if it is the only life and once dead they shall not come back to life and there shall be no day of judgment; they live this life as the ultimate in itself.

Living our faith follows; -

- ✓ Struggle for the life hereafter; Allah says in Sura An Najam [53:39-42], "And that man [woman] can have nothing but what he does [good or bad]; and his deeds will be seen; then he will be recompensed with a full and the best recompense".

- ✓ Be content (grateful) with what you are given in this life, trust Allah's decision and ask not for more it might not be good for you in this life and life hereafter; Allah says, "O'Muhammad pbuh do not envy those to whom Allah has given abundance of children and wealth, Allah (has decreed for them) wants that when they die they should die as wrong doers".
- ✓ Always be ready to sacrifice (delay gratification and forebear challenges) your present for a better tomorrow; Allah says, "O' you who have believed, seek help (from Allah alone) through sa'bar and prayer. Indeed, Allah is with the sa'bareen".
- ✓ Believe that life hereafter will be better than this life; Allah says in Sura Waduha, "(Surely) your life hereafter will be better than present.
- ✓ Believe that life hereafter will be better than this life; Allah says in Sura Waduha, "(Surely) your life hereafter will be better than present.
- ✓ Remember, in this life hardship is a blessing and comfort is an ordeal; Allah says in Sura Waqiha, "The dwellers of Hell had lived their lives in comfort".

Steadfastness: Strength of Character

Prophet Ibrahim صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم was put in the blazing fire in an effort to make him revert from monotheism, but for no avail. Pharaoh warned the magicians to abstain from accepting monotheism, but for no avail. Prophet Muhammad صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم was considered a man of trust amongst his fellow tribesmen before his prophet hood. Nelson Mandela,

African Leader, spent most of his life time in jail, yet he did not let his mission drift away, Muhammad Ali Jinnah was known as a man of principles amongst his friends and foes. Examples of such persons abound. The common feature of all these persons was that they all were miraculously successful: They all were steadfast in their beliefs, commitments and principles!

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ قَالُوا رَبُّنَا اللَّهُ ثُمَّ اسْتَقَمُوا تَتَنَزَّلُ عَلَيْهِمُ الْمَلَائِكَةُ أَلَّا تَخَافُوا وَلَا تَحْزَنُوا وَأَبْشِرُوا بِالْجَنَّةِ الَّتِي كُنتُمْ تُوعَدُونَ (٣٠)
وَإِلَّا يَأْتِيَنَّكُمْ فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَفِي آخِرَةِ وَلَكُمْ فِيهَا مَا تَشْتَهُ أَنْفُسُكُمْ وَلَكُمْ فِيهَا مَا تَدْعُونَ (٣١)

Steadfastness (*Istiqamat*) is a sign of maturity; trustworthiness; credibility; and, predictability of character: A person who lives by his or her commitments and promises, and adheres to his or her values and principles come what may is a man of character. Allah says in the Noble Quran, “Indeed, those who have said, Our Lord is Allah and then remained on a right course (steadfast on their faith) – the angels will descend upon them, [saying], do not fear and do not grieve but receive good tidings of Paradise, which you were promised (41:30), We [angels] were your allies in worldly life and [are so] in the Hereafter. And you will have therein whatever your souls desire, and you will have therein whatever you request [or wish] (41:31). At other verses Allah says, “Break not your commitments and promises” and “Run not from the war front unless the retrieval is a strategic move to hit back”. In the Bible it is defined as, “Firmly fixed in place; not subject to change; firm in belief, determination, or adherence”.

Daily Life Manifestations and Rationale of Steadfastness

At times we make promises casually without realizing our obligation. For example, a seller might casually say, "I will return this product if it does not work for you at any future date", only to influence buying decision while ignoring the long-term implications. If the product really does not work and the customer comes back to return it, the seller will resort excuses only to avoid his earlier commitment. Likewise, both employers and employees make boasting commitments to each other only to hire or get hired. Sadly, when either of them fails to do what they had committed, they resort to blame game only to avoid their commitments. Furthermore, we often fail to live by our own principles and values. The usual manner to overcome the guilt of not living by one's principles and values is following 'If' and 'But' strategy. For example, one may proclaim that he is strongly against corruption but still would often end up paying bribe to get his business going. Later he would justify saying, "if I had not done this, the man would have ruined my business" or "I did not give bribe happily it was but forced upon me".

The crux of the matter is that we let our desires and motivations, benefits and advantages, last but not the least weaknesses prevail over our commitments and principles. The obvious outcome is less dependability and higher vulnerability to misconduct. It is about time to ponder if it is worth! Or should we live our commitments and principles without fail, what come may.

My Self Has Right on Me

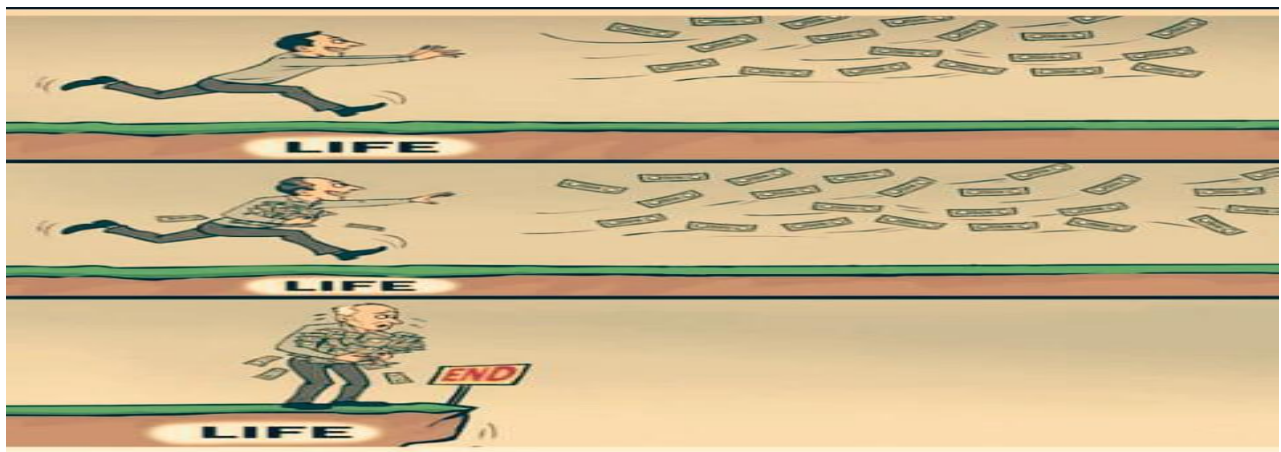
She is a certified corporate director and razor-sharp marketing guru. Recently she narrated her wonderful experience, when she got sick. While she wanted to take a pause from the work chores and socializing with friends to give time to herself it was unbelievably difficult: Her colleagues and clients kept making her realize how important she is at work: “Hi get well soon, we miss you at work”. Her friends too sent messages saying “Get well soon and let’s party”. It was the time she realized that much of her daily hours are spent for others’ happiness and remainder of her time is consumed by her immediate family. The only time she has for herself is when she sleeps, but if she gets time to get sound sleep once in a blue moon.

Listening to her story, I realized that she is not the only victim of interdependence-syndrome. Each of us is! We spend major part of our lives in work organizations or socializing, which is alright as long as we enrich future of our own self. But it does not happen this way in most of the situations. We work 24/7 to make the organizations perpetuate their prosperity for long, but organizations careless of how we make our ends meet and where we spend our lives once retired. We spare time from our personal chores to socialize to find happiness, but the dependence on friends for the happiness turns into a duty to respond even if we just want to be with our soul and body. The most ironical of all is when our body or soul gets sick and we are forced to detach ourselves from rest of the world our colleagues and friends send messages to us to get well and join them soon – a polite demand from them – but can they remove the pain emanating from the sickness or can they share it. Nay! We have to bear it alone, just like we were born alone and will die alone. In short, we are needed so long we can earn profit for the organizations and bring joy to our friends. Once we are replaced by younger resources in organizations and better friends in the social circle, we are no more than lost history. No one would care what we are going through – we are dead in our graves all alone as were born.

It is about time to balance between ours and others rights on us. It is not advantageous to let our rights be compromised in giving others' their rights – others care less of our compromises. No one will share loss of our “self” in this life and life to come; no one can! Allah says, “Even if one wants to give his entire wealth, family and friends he shall not be pardoned for wrongs he did in his life” We often violate our rights on us, forego our advantages, break our principles and of all let go that part of the time for others that should be for us only. Regrets would do no better, one needs to be proactive in protecting his rights for a better and successful self.

Philosophy of Success!

Success is getting your purpose and attaining your objectives that would bring you closer to your purpose. People may define different purposes of their lives but the purpose that Allah has defined for granting this life to us is ultimate and final: Allah says in Sura Mulk Verse 2, "I have created death and life to test (as an evidence for us otherwise He is all knower) who does good deeds". It is interesting to also refer to Sura Takasur, Verse 1, 2 where Allah says, "Mutual Rivalry (competition for accumulating wealth) Diverts You; Until you reach (end up) in (your) grave. Thus, we learn that all which we attain does not bring us closer to our purpose. Only the objectives that are consistent with the purpose bring us close to our purpose.

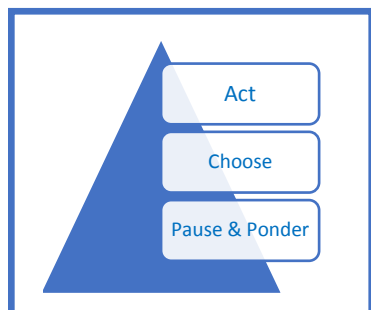


Reflection

"Often times we act like an insane and compromise everything in our lives just to become richer. Looking at our lives in retrospect, no matter how much money we make we still end up fulfilling our needs. Excess money only brings happiness but not for long. Then one day we die leaving all the money behind."

We all know for sure that chasing our desires beyond the necessity is a compromise of other achievements in life like quality family time; stress free living; relationships; last but not the least contentment. But sadly, we have no conviction (Haq ul Yaqeen) neither we take lessons from others (Ilm ul Yaqeen) until it becomes too late and our lives come to end (Aain ul Yaqeen). It is perhaps too late then.

Living the Purpose of Life



Thrilled by the exciting life management advices by experts, I began to wonder what really “Life” is about. I realized that without bias, there exist many perspectives; some are convergent while some are divergent. The good thing, however is that an average person wants to get success in life. Some make deliberate efforts to define their purpose then achieve it: *The Effectiveness Paradigm*. Some pursue their lives without expressly defining their purpose in life and consider their achievements, in whatever directions these may be as their implied purpose: *The Achievement Paradigm*. To evaluate the different approaches to life management paradigms and the advices propagated by the experts, uncovering different life perspectives is a first step.

In the divine concept, this life is nothing but a trial! In Quran Allah has categorically mentioned life perspective in following verses more specifically although the entire Quran deals with the management of life. In Sūrat, Al Dhāriyāt Verse 56 Allah says, “*And I did not create the jinn and mankind except to worship Me*”. In Sura Al Mulk Verse 02 Allah says, “*Who hath created life and death that He may try you which of you is best in conduct; and He is the Mighty, the Forgiving*”. In Sura Kehaf Verse 7, Allah says, “*Verily we have made that which is on earth as an adornment for it, in order that We may test them (mankind) as to which of them are best in deed*”. In Sura Al Fajr Verses 15 & 16, Allah says, “*As for man, when his Lord tries him by giving him honor and bounties, then he says (in exultation) My Lord has*

honored me. But when He tries him by straining his means of life (then) he says, "My Lord has humiliated me".

We can interpret the above-mentioned verses in the back drop of the faith on Day-of-Judgment and life hereafter, shared by Jews, Christians and Muslims alike. Two major facts follow, namely; it has been a living truth since the beginning that whosoever is born also dies one day. Having said this, we have basis to say life in this world is a temporary phenomenon and the real life shall begin (In Shaa Allah) later. Secondly, the very purpose of this life is that Allah ST tests us if we worship (do righteous) or not so he may give reward or punish us accordingly in the ultimate life here after. Opportunities, knowledge, affluence and hardship, comfort and inflictions, power and powerlessness, etc. in this life are neither rewards nor reprimands (curse) but meant to test how we shall act?

The life perspective in the modern age is that of materialism (wealth). As we may infer from the actions of ourselves, the very purpose of our lives (existence) is to accumulate wealth. Education, development and professional endeavors are all directed towards accumulating more and more wealth. One can say that here the life in this world becomes the end in itself and the objects of trial become the rewards (and punishments). In short, the connection of this life does not exist with that of the life hereafter, notwithstanding that if someone has faith on next life or no faith.

In Sura Al Baqarah, Verses 200 to 202 Allah says, *"And among the people is he (she) who says, "Our Lord, give us in this world," and he (she) will have in the Hereafter no share. But among them is he (she) who says, "Our Lord, give us in this world [that which is] good and in the Hereafter [that which is]*

good and protect us from the punishment of the Fire." Those will have a share of what they have earned, and Allah is swift in account.

Considering the two perspectives, it is difficult to say who is right and who is not. However, the two perspectives can be described for more clarity and allowing more informed choice. Individuals living from the former perspective display rational behavior to live the trial successfully while seeking the necessities or facing the situation, however comfortable or difficult it may be and hope to get rewards or avert punishments in the life hereafter. Individuals living from the latter perspective seem to take their achievements in this life as rewards. These are the persons who either deny the life hereafter or keep the two lives independent of each other.

In Sura Al-Baqara, verse 256, Allah says, "There is no compulsion in religion; truly the right way has become clearly distinct from error; therefore, whoever disbelieves in the Shaitan and believes in Allah he indeed has laid hold on the firmest handle, which shall not break off, and Allah is Hearing, Knowing".

We can choose the path today (in this life)! Once dead then Allah will decide our fate per our choice made in this life!

Dos and Don'ts of Successful Life

Allah is Al Mighty; Benevolent; Merciful; and the only creator and sustainer of everything that exists or will come to exist and the only authority of the day-of-judgment: He has put a condition on himself that He shall not decree punishment onto His slaves but before that He shall send His Prophet and through him His book of guidance, in every nation. This is scribed in Quran.

We have basis to say that Allah desires that we all find success in this life and next life; and why not, after all He is the one who created us in perfect shape. But we often suspect His wish and sometimes think not that He has made Justice compulsory onto Him. Justice means reward for right deeds and punishment for the wrong ones. In Sura Mulk, Allah says, "I have created death and life to try which slave follow right path". It would be wrong to interpret this ayat that (Naazibillah) Allah does not know who will follow his guidance and who will not; yes, He does so by all means. Still He gives this opportunity to us to do what we have to do and promises to make our efforts easier for us, in whatever direction we choose. In Quran Allah says, "I guide people from this Quran to whom I wish (who show desire for guidance) and some people go astray from this Quran (who show arrogance and disbelief)".

Quran is the complete version of Allah's guidance. Allah says in Quran, "Today I have completed my blessing unto you and have completed the guidance (deen)". At another place in Quran, Allah says, "Those (people of book) who were given some part of guidance from Allah know that this Quran is from Allah". The spirit of Quran is based on the principle of caveat-emptor as we call it, although it is Allah's wisdom from the beginning. According to this principle, Allah has been making nations (people) aware of right and wrong through the ages so that they may take heed of it and attain success.

It is clear from the messages of Quran and His previous revelations that He wants us to live fair, decent and above all with a purpose. Purpose is in the center of our lives, if this gets distorted than the other two factors automatically are altered.

As we suspect the day-of-judgment and life hereafter then we say death is end forever and some say death is just a loss of an old body and the man comes back with a new one. We rationalize all these theories only to attain consonance despite our suspicion. The result is we lose sight of our real purpose and come up with something based on our wishful thinking. But a wishful thinking can't change the reality although it gives a sense of success in this life, however, temporary it may be. Allah says those who are saved from Hell fire on the day-of-judgment are the successful. Nevertheless, for many of us, life is about educating oneself to get a good job; get a good job to accumulate more and more wealth; accumulate more wealth to get more and more luxuries and power in life; afford more luxuries for oneself and family and power to secure the wealth. Some succeed in doing this while others fail. Going further, often times we interpret greater the wealth and power means that we are more blessed and closer to Allah. Here it is worth reminding to ourselves the Allah's saying, "(The disbelievers) ask for the bounties in this life, while Allah gives them what He wills but they shall have no share in the life hereafter. And those who have faith ask Allah for "Hasana" i.e. to be able to live their lives on the righteous path so they get His blessing and pleasure of Allah in this life and in the next life, and they may be saved from Hell Fire. Sadly, now-a-days we (proclaimed faithful) sail in two boats. In this life we follow our desires for wealth and luxuries and for the next life we hope to get Jannah. Allah beware us in Quran that those who follow their desires are the followers of Satan and in Sura Takasur Allah says, "In (their) desire for more

and more they became rivals to each other and got distracted. In Sura Hummaz Allah says, "Cursed are the ones who insult others on their face and backbite them and hoard wealth but spend not..." Yet we take little heed from these warnings and keep pursuing our desires for more and more.

Having warned of the Don'ts of a successful life, In Sura Asr Allah guides us on the Dos of a sustainable successful life. In this small yet comprehensive Sura He swears upon time (According to a Hadees e Qudsi, Allah said I have created time so time is me...) and say everyone is doomed except those who do the followings: Keep faith (conviction on Allah and His guidance and suspect not); keep himself on the righteous path despite challenges and compromises he would face and say no to his impulses or desires; spread what is true and righteous (Haq), and optimism that is hope for a better future despite compromises and tribulations of today (Sab'aar).

May Allah open our hearts for the acceptance of His Guidance!

Purpose Matters

Often, we all do good things but we don't know the reason of doing it. Consequently, our actions shrink to rituals and the time & resources are wasted. For example, we buy expensive things responding to our impulse. Likewise, lot of times we follow the crowd in making our decisions. In nutshell many a times we do things in others' following or to make them happier not to fulfill our purpose. Though we achieve our target of satisfying our impulse, pleasing others or competing with them in wealth but as time pass by, we realize that our purpose remains a distant target: All our achievements become irrelevant as soon as we die.

We all respond to our situation and people around us with the objective to get others' approval or to attract them and in doing so we secure our goals. Naïve of us! It is not others whose approval makes our actions worthy. Instead, our actions that bring us closer to our purpose are worthy be it through seeking livelihood; doing things for parents and family; educating ourselves or our children; innovation and enterprise to serve the mankind and create jobs; extending helping hand to the needy; etc.

In Sura Al-Dharyat [51:56] Allah says, "And I did not create the jinn and mankind except to worship [obey] Me". Some amongst us act right with the right intention to obey and please Allah (as Allah's right on them) in whatever they do [life chores], so we hope they shall in shall Allah attain their very purpose in this life and will be in Jannah in the life hereafter. Some amongst us do act right but with a different intention i.e. to please others, to make them happier, seek their approval or to compete with them they are the ones who pursue their goals but fail to accomplish their purpose – Worshiping Allah.

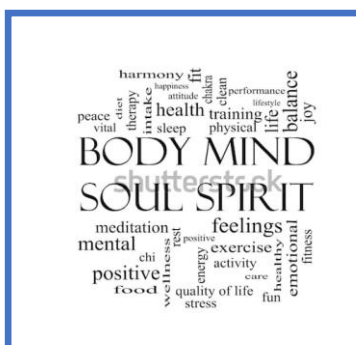
Having said this, some people live for this life and some live for the life hereafter. The former pursues goals – Goals are immediate outcomes – and latter pursue purpose – Purpose is the ultimate outcome of our actions. For some education is meant to secure their goal of a luxurious life ahead and for some education is meant to accomplish their purpose of better understanding this life, for example.

Optimism: Reality or Illusion of Life

Evidences suggest that optimistic persons live happier life; bear the hardships with perseverance and patience; feel less stressed; and are more acceptable among their friends and coworkers. What is optimism? It can be looked upon from two angles, namely; ability to hope for the better in the future (In Sura Ad'Duha Allah says to the messenger ﷺ, "Your future will be better than your present". In here Allah is giving to him hope for a better future so he may bear the hardship), and secondly as an attitude to accept come what may (Referred to as Nafs e Mutmaina in the Noble Quran).

Generally speaking, optimism is somehow connected to positivity. Positivity is defined as, "Our ability to focus at the brighter side: How we see things, events and people".

defined as, "Our ability to expectations about the or assessment, however, unrealistic. Positivity can "Wishful belief" at one end



Likewise, Optimism is maintain positive future". The expectation could be realistic or be on a continuum of and "Pragmatism" on

the other end. In this context, optimism could be a manifestation of our Wishful-belief or pragmatic outlook. The former being simply wishful and unrealistic, while the latter is well considered and realistic. Example: Continuing to smoke cigarette believing that it will never hurt me is naive optimism stemming from wishful positivity. Stopping to smoke cigarette believing that it will save oneself from critical medical conditions is informed optimism. This type of optimism stems from pragmatic positivity.

By considering optimism in isolation of positivity we get yet another perspective, perhaps more consistent with the concept of "Nafs-e-Mutmaina"

in the Noble Quran. Accordingly, optimism is an attitude of accepting the future with gratitude, come what may. This Hadith e Qudsi explains it, “Oh slave, one is your wish and the other is my wisdom. If you accept what is my wisdom (I have chosen for you) then I will also give you what you have wished. But if you do not accept what is my wisdom even then it would still be done, then I will make you tired but will not give you what you have wished.”

Every day we are challenged to make decisions with implications extending into the future. For example, whether to make a business investment or not; whether to register in a degree program or not; whether I can achieve my goal or not; whether I can solve the problem or not; whether I can do it or not. Our effectiveness to make good decisions has its roots in our ability to maintain informed optimism and an attitude of acceptance.

Pride or Thankfulness

From our birth to everything we accomplish is bestowed from Allah! But it is a norm now that we loudly take pride in everything, we are blessed with be it winning a game, passing examination, getting a job and of all commanding authority or becoming rich as if we are all powerful and capable of doing it. What we ignore to realize is that when we embrace success with a pride, we inevitably become complacent about our weaknesses hence fail to improve upon and also, we deny the reality! On the contrary showing thankfulness prepares us to do even better in the future and bring us closer to the reality.

In Sura Al Hujurat [49:17] Allah says, "They consider it a favor to you that they have accepted Islam. Say, "Do not consider your Islam a favor to me. Rather, Allah has conferred favor upon you that He has guided you to the faith, if you should be truthful." In Sura Baqarah [2:34] Allah says, "And [mention] when We said to the angels, "Prostrate before Adam"; so, they prostrated, except for Iblees [Satan]. He refused and was arrogant and became of the disbelievers.

In the first verse Allah ST teaches us to be thankful and in the latter verse He warns us of the repercussions of pride (arrogance). In short "Thankfulness" brings forth happiness and more success and "Pride" follows tribulations. In Sura Ibrahim pbuh [14:7] Allah says, "And [remember] when your Lord proclaimed, 'If you are grateful, I will surely increase you [in favor]; but if you deny, indeed, My punishment is severe."

Let us always be thankful and say no to pride!!!

Embracing Success and Enduring Failure!



Success or failure is like a mirage: What seems a success now might turn into failure later and what comes as a failure might turn out to be a great success later. A person might hop to a new position more prosperous and closer to one's heart but soon the truth might turn different. Likewise, a person may feel sad missing out an opportunity but later he might realize that the opportunity was not worth it.

At every moment we all either succeed or fail. How best to deal with our fate put us on the growth trajectory or be the victim of pride or complacency and failure-trap. It is important to embrace our fate realistically: One should take successes with gratitude and failures as a correction-prompt.

Embracing Success with Ema'an

Often times when we succeed our confidence is reinforced and it should be, but at the same times we blind fold our eyes to the mistakes we made in our journey to success and more importantly we often wrongly take credit of succeeding whereas the reality is success comes from Allah. Here are the tips for dealing with success rightly...

In Sura An Nasr [110] Allah has guided us in his words as to how to embrace success, "When comes Help of Allah (to you, O'Muhammad PBUH against your enemies) and the conquest (of Makkah); And you see that the people enter Allah's religion (Islam) in crowds; So glorify the Praises of your Lord, and ask for His Forgiveness. Verily, He is the One Who accepts the repentance and forgives".

DOs

- Pay unconditional gratitude to Allah: Accept that success is from Allah, it is HE who rewards the slaves. Al Quran, “And if Allah should afflict you with harm, then there is none to remove it but He; and if He intends good to you there is none to repel His grace; He brings it to whom He pleases of His servants; and He is the Forgiving, the Merciful.” (10:107)
- Harness your confidence: Take cognizance of your weaknesses that might have dragged your efforts a bit. In retrospect, you might realize that you could have done even better if you had done more of such and such and less of such and such actions and seek help (*taufeeq*) from Allah to improve.

- **DON'Ts**

- Don't say or believe that success has come as Luck: It is a disbelief! Nothing happens randomly in our lives.
- Say not I have got the success because of my intelligence, knowledge or muscle power: Allah is the one to whom we owe our strengths. He grants to whom He wills. Al Quran, “He (Qaroon) said, “I was only given it because of knowledge I have; Did he not know that Allah had destroyed before him of generations those who were greater than him in power and greater in accumulation [of wealth]? But the criminals, about their sins, will not be asked (they themselves will admit their sins)” (28:78)

Enduring Failures with Optimism (Sa'bar)

Failure is a difficult time for everyone but not so difficult for those who have trust in Allah. Sometimes failure can destroy our future. But those who keep their trust on Allah hence could see light at the end of tunnel. When they fail to accomplish, they definitely do not blame others of their failure or curse their "Luck" or the "Time" but prepare to succeed next time!

Allah has guided us in his words, as to how to embrace success: "Believers! Seek help in optimism (saba'ar) and in Prayer; Allah is with those that are optimistic (2:153). We shall certainly test you by afflicting you with fear, hunger, loss of properties and lives and fruits. Give glad tidings, then, to those who remain optimistic (2:155). Those who when any affliction smites them, they say: "Verily, we belong to Allah, and it is to Him that we are destined to return" (2:156). Upon them will be the blessings and mercy of their Lord, and it is they who are rightly guided (2:157)".

- **DOs**
 - Accept failures as outcomes of our reversible weaknesses: Introspect, describe and unravel your intentions, and behaviors that led to the failure. Al Quran, "Whatever misfortune befalls you is a consequence of your own deeds..." (42:30)
 - Correct your faith: Change your beliefs, values, thinking and focus. Al Quran, "Allah does not change a people's condition unless they change what is in their hearts (intentions)." (13: 11).
 - Look for newer opportunities: Be realistic and think of alternate ways and goals to succeed.

- **DON'Ts**

- Save your confidence: Never lose hope from Allah; don't think it is the end of life; don't tag yourself as a failure; ignore sadistic comments and responses of others.
- Don't curse: Never say it is other People or the Time that brought failure to you. People can't make you succeed or fail. Al Quran, "And if Allah should afflict you with harm, then there is none to remove it but He; and if He intends good to you there is none to repel His grace; He brings it to whom He pleases of His servants; and He is the Forgiving, the Merciful." (10:107). Time (period) is a virtual concept; it cannot do well or harm to people. Hadees e Qudsi, "Sons of Adam inveigh (angered) against the vicissitudes (change) of Time, and I (Allah) am Time, in My hand are the night and the day (As the Almighty is the Ordainer of all things, to inveigh against misfortunes that are part of Time is tantamount to inveighing against Him)." It was related by al-Bukhari and Muslim.

Habits that Destroy Our Life

Our life is a finite phenomenon. Every passing day makes this realization deeper and deeper that nothing is more precious than our life: It is equally true for those who desire this world as well as for those who aim for the life hereafter. Nevertheless, often we develop certain habits that destroy our life. These habits are described in this short story. Awareness often helps overcome wrong that we all do.

Ironically consumerism and showoff culture go hand in hand, for each compliment the other. It breeds desires (demand) alongside resentment, especially among the have-nots. Consequences of the resentment are usually devastating for oneself and others. Allah teaches us in the Noble Quran Sura An Nisa [4:32], "And don't envy (desire) what Allah has conferred (given) abundantly to some of you over (others). For men there is reward for what they earned, (and likewise) for women there is reward for what they earned. Ask Allah of His Bounty. Surely, Allah is All-Knower of everything.

- Ø To envy;
- Ø To stalk;
- Ø To suspect;
- Ø To act miser;
- Ø To act passive;
- Ø To live with grudge;
- Ø To ridicule & back bite;

Suspicion is mostly the root of all conflicts, especially when it is based on assumption or hearsay. It destroys trust and confidence that each of us need on others to transact with them either in our social, economic or political lives. In Sura Hujarat [49:12], Allah says, "O you who believe! Avoid most of suspicion, for surely suspicion in some cases is a sin, and do not spy nor let some of you backbite others. Does one of you like to eat the flesh of his dead brother? But you abhor it; and be careful of (your duty to) Allah, surely Allah is Oft-returning (to mercy), Merciful".

Stalking is a crime, and it is harassment because you are harming the other persons, perhaps not directly, but you are putting them in a position of insecurity and vulnerability. Please see Quranic Ayat [49:12] referred above.

Backbiting and ridiculing have become prevalent in our lives. It does cause excitement for a time being but destroys relationships beyond repair. In Sura Al Humaza [104:01] Allah says, "Woe to every scorner and mocker". Please also see Quranic Ayat [49:12].

Wealth earned but not spent is not earned! One needs to balance spending: it needs not to be extravagant nor it should be kept tightly. Being extravagant means spending wealth where no value is created for oneself or others but just a show-off is meant. It creates unhealthy competition, higher dissatisfaction among the have-nots and of all brings forth induced poverty for the one who spends extravagantly. In Sura Al Isra [17:29] Allah says, "And do not make your hand [as] chained to your neck or extend it completely and [thereby] become blamed and insolvent. In Al-Humaza [104:01] Allah says, "Woe to every scorner and mocker; who collects wealth and [continuously] counts it; he thinks that his wealth will make him immortal; no! he will surely be thrown into the Crusher [Hell fire].

Remember, wealth is bestowed by Allah and is meant to be shared with parents, family, the needy and poor. A wise spending of wealth on oneself, parents, family, the needy and the poor nurtures balanced society, reduce dissatisfaction among the have-nots and of all one earns Allah's pleasure.

It is necessary for each of us to live with grace and freedom so to practice our faith and pursue our rights. Nevertheless, some people decide to give-in to the exploitation of powerful and live their lives like a slave: Be it a country, society, work organization or social circle. It only destroys our opportunities, potentials and the future. In Sura An-Nisa [4:97] Allah says, "Indeed, those whom the angels take [in death] while wronging themselves - [the angels] will say, "In what [condition] were you?" They will say, "We were oppressed in the land." The angels will say, "Was not the earth of Allah spacious [enough] for you to emigrate therein?" For those, their refuge is Hell - and evil it is as a destination".

Grudge is a negative emotion one carries for another person or persons. It pops up from feeling envy with someone. We often times refuse to accept other people to whom Allah has given better looks and attire, more wealth and position, bigger family etc. all because of grudge. It is a manifestation of denial and pride. Persons having grudge often times try to destroy the other our person but in doing so he often times destroy his own life as he always lives with jealousy and hatred. Yet he blames the other person for his wrong doings. In Sura Al Hijr [15:32-39] "[Allah] said, O Iblees, what is [the matter] with you that you are not with those who prostrate?" He said, never would I prostrate to a human whom You created out of clay from an altered black mud. [Allah] said, then get out of it, for indeed, you are expelled. And indeed, upon you is the curse until the Day of Recompense. He said, My Lord, then reprieve me until the Day they are resurrected. [Allah] said, so indeed, you are of those reprieved Until the Day of the time well-known. [Iblees] said, My Lord, because You have put me in error, I will surely make [disobedience] attractive to them on earth, and I will mislead them all.

It is clear from the above verses that Satan [Iblees] first felt envy of Adam and refused to accept him superior to himself, later he blamed Allah for his mistake and developed grudge against Adam PBUH and the entire mankind.

Dua'

O' Allah change what is in our hearts (intentions) and our habits for good; and give us your blessings in this life and hereafter; and save us from all sorts of fitna and hell fire. Ameen.

Turn Suspicion into Confidence

Often times we all mistakenly show disrespect to people by their face value; No! But because we **assume** that such and such person is not worthy enough for, he does not carry charisma nor has a higher status and material wellbeing. Sometimes, we also **suspect** that his intentions are not sincere. Consequently, not only we disrespect but also let go the opportunity that he might pose.

Allah says in Sura Abasa, [80:1-5], "The Prophet PBUH frowned and turned away; because there came to him a blind man [while he was preaching to a man probably one of chiefs among the Quraish]; and how can you know that he might become pure (the blind man); and he might receive admonition, and admonition might profit him; as for him who thinks himself sufficient [the Chief]; to him you attend".

In the above ayat, Allah has guided us to judge people by their **sincerity of intentions and urge** rather than their appearance [hallo effect]. Allah knows but we don't know who deserves more respect and attention: **Attend to everyone with respect, positivity and without any suspicion, whatsoever.**

Instincts: Critical Personality Dimension



What we are is what we do! If we are honest in our conduct, act rationally, respond passionately, etc. then we will get a tag of “**Good Guy**” but if we play foul, act in haste, respond indifferently, etc. then we will get a tag of “**Bad Guy**”.

Besides our ability to think (cognition), habits, attitude motivation etc. our instincts have rather controlling role in what we do and how we do it, thus shaping our image. Instincts are natural impulses to do or not to do something. Oftentimes instincts overpower our other dimensions of personality so much so that our actions are solely controlled by our instincts.

In the Noble Quran Allah has informed us of three dissimilar *Instincts*, namely; contentment, impulse (devilish urge) and conscience (guilt). These instincts are innate in each of us. How people manage these instincts differentiates them in their conduct from each other. The Arabic names of these instincts are *Nafs e Mutmainna*; *Nafs e Ammara*; and, *Nafs e Lawama*.

A person truly in control of his instincts is the one who is able to effectively accomplish his or her goals while carrying no guilt. Having said this, self-regulation is at the heart of managing instincts. What is self-regulation? The answer is simple! We constantly face choices in our life and career. At the spur of moment every choice is a good choice. But practically some are good choices and some are not good, for these can destruct our life and career on the longer time horizon. Multiplicity of choices makes compromise an inevitable process. Oftentimes these compromises end up in synergizing our life or career or both but wrong compromises can turn our life and career

upside down. What we choose is greatly influenced by our instincts: Whether to make an impulsive (devilish) choice and jeopardize future or act with contentment and secure a better future. Sometimes realization comes after one has made an impulsive (devilish) choice, which leads to regret or guilt. The regret is good to avert repeating the wrong choices and continuing damages; thus, it is a correcting factor.

Tips to Manage Our Instincts

Nafs e Mutmaina

- Always be grateful to Allah
- Delegate future (outcome) to Allah
- Stay contented with come what may

Nafs e Ammara

- Say no to devilish impulses
- Recognize and avoid satanic behavior: Lagve, vulgar, illegal, immoral, etc.
- Always seek Allah's protection against the evil of devilish impulses

Nafs e Lawama

- Listen to your conscience
- Let guilt, regret and shame pinch you from within, every time falls prey to Nafs e Ammara
- Consider your conscience as a blessing in disguise to bring correction

Personal accomplishments entail self-regulation, which in turn is influenced by our innate instincts. Hence, we must inculcate Nafs e Mutmaina and Nafs e Lawama so much so that Nafs e Ammara is effectively defeated.

Motivation for More and More

Our lives would have become a reflection of Heaven on earth only if we had balanced our priorities in our lives. Nay! Our rivalry to get more than others has made our lives a reflection of Hell. Sadly! We have become rivals to each other under the disguise of “*Survival of the Fittest*”: Our need for a decent living has turned into hyper motivation for more and more wealth; our priority for accumulating more and more wealth has eclipsed other vital priorities in our life; we ourselves have compromised our work-life balance; we challenged our relationships, an essence of human race, by our status incongruence; we have replaced morals by our personal gratification; last but not the least, we have unconsciously challenged purpose of our life and displaced it to the temporary gratification over the real success! We all realize this but many a times at the end of life, when our time to perform is already over.

It is about time to ponder what has made us different human beings – *the Economic Men and Women*? In Sura Al Takathur [102] Allah warns, “*The mutual rivalry for piling up (motivation for more wealth and adornments of this world) diverts you (from the doing righteous deeds and the life hereafter); Until you reach your graves; But no, you shall soon (upon death) know (the divine reality); Again, you shall soon know!; No, were you to know with certainty of mind, (you would beware!); You shall certainly see Hell-Fire!; Again, you shall see it with certainty of sight!; Then, you shall be questioned on Day (of Judgment) about the joy (you indulged in!)*”

As one can infer from the above Surah the crux of our rivalry hence all other problems are mainly short sightedness and loss of conviction on the life hereafter, although we proclaim to have faith on it yet we follow what we

see; but we fail to accept the unseen with conviction. Hence, we live this life as an “end” rather than “means to life hereafter”, for we can see the lust and adornments of this life but cannot see the life in Heaven or Hell, hereafter until the day we die. But then perhaps it would be too late to acknowledge it.

In Surah Mulk, Allah says, “He has created death and life (only) to test (his slaves) who do good deeds (and who do not).

In Surah Baqarah, Allah says, “Disbelievers ask for (more and more treasures) of this life, so they shall have no share in the life hereafter; And the Believers ask Allah to give them what is good in this life [i.e. to show us the straight path, the path of those whom you have favored, not the (path) of those who earn your anger nor of those who go astray. Surah Fatiha] and ask for what is good in life hereafter and to save them from the [torment of] hell fire.

Live this life with life hereafter as your vision; harness your motivation for doing right things not following your desires; earn your livelihood but follow not your greed for more; and, last but do not least find balance in your life. Allah willing, it will make your life a true reflection of heaven; and, will make you succeed in the life hereafter, the fate of which shall not change on our wishes.

Flipside of High-end Life Style

Ever wondered the flipside of **High-end (Luxurious) Life Style**? Indeed, to avail luxuries is every one's desire in today's world. All the struggle that people make through their lives is for attaining High-end life style. But the question is, does a High-end life style come without compromising of more vital aspects of people's lives and is it worth compromising? **Time to ponder!**



Context: In the Holy Quran, Allah says, “And those on the Left Hand Who will be those on the Left Hand? In fierce hot wind and boiling water, and shadow of black smoke, (That shadow) neither cool, nor (even) good. **Verily, before that, they indulged in luxury.** (Surah Al Waqi’ah 56:41-45). History is evident that societies who had high-end life style were doomed. Mughal Empire in the Indian Subcontinent is a very recent example. Modern day consumerism and competition has led to more than required focus on acquiring more and more luxuries and the cost is obvious. Evidences are there that at times in pursuit of a High-end life style few people have taken illicit routes: corruption, bribery, cheating, etc.

Analysis: High-end Life Style is a syndrome which leads to many ills. Such as, the cost of standing up for the principles and causes become very high; persons become so much dependent on the luxuries that it is impossible for them to survive in times of hardships; Luxuries have no limits hence the persons become slave of their yawning needs; often times the cost of luxuries is sacrificing *Sukun*; last but not the least, luxurious living is a moving target: what is High-end life style today may not suffice tomorrow. In fact, luxuries today become basics tomorrow.

Interestingly, it is noticed that after attaining a level of luxurious living the need for *Sukun* re-surfaces at the conscious level and becomes more urgent. It has been observed that many wealthy people leave behind their empires and spend their retired life in the woods in search of *Sukun*. This may be more relevant for the western world, in South Asia examples abound of people dedicating their lives to religion or social work in search of *Sukun*. Yet many people may keep denying their urgency for *Sukun* so it becomes manifest in their deteriorating physical health, behavioral problems, addiction and relationship issues.

This follows that High end living and *Sukun* are in competing relationship. While luxurious living is a material wellbeing and is sort by accumulating material resources, *Sukun* is a peace of mind – a state of peace from the hectic stress one inevitably experiences in the continuous search of unending luxuries. Different people may attain peace of mind in different ways. Some might find peace retrieving to the basics at the end of their careers, some will do meditation and some will do social work. Nevertheless, real peace of mind lies in remembering the creator (Allah) – Al Quran. Here remembering the creator has to be understood in a broader context. Meaning, people should organize their lives in conformity of the divine guidance, from the beginning to the end.

Poverty in Perspective

Ever since the independence of Pakistan, poverty has been a national challenge. In a conventional perspective, poverty is simply lack of choices and resources. From this perspective many interventions that are internationally acknowledged include the followings: Establishment of safety net; economic empowerment through micro enterprise development; gender equality; and last but not the least, education. The evidence of success of the above-mentioned interventions has been positive and negative, depending on other variables.

In a non-conventional perspective, poverty can be defined from a fresh angle hitherto ignored. The flip side of Capitalism and consumerism is unwarranted increase in needs for more and more. This has put the individuals and families chasing their yawning needs, while the income (resources) not increasing at the same rate. The result is inability to afford continually higher and higher living standards. Consequently, an induced feeling (perception) of deprivation and inadequacy is developed in a large number of individuals and families. This follows that poverty in a non-conventional perspective is an induced phenomenon related to extravagant culture.

Beware of Poverty Trap

Poverty has always been considered a tribulation everywhere. Sometimes it is a real trial from Allah on his slaves and sometimes it is a self-imposed curse. In this short article I have attempted to analyze the latter basis of poverty: A self-imposed curse and perhaps what is needed to overcome it. I may sound contradictory but I am sure if you read it with an open mind you will inshallah find some sound reasoning in my arguments. Happy reading ahead!

In a conventional perspective, poverty is simply lack of choices and resources. From this perspective many interventions that are internationally acknowledged include the followings: Establishment of safety net similar to system of Zakat (compulsory charity) and Sadaqah (extra benevolence); economic empowerment through micro enterprise development; gender equality; and last but not the least, education. The evidence of success of the above-mentioned interventions has been mixed. In certain conditions the interventions have been a success while in other no, depending on other variables in the permeable environment. However, the case may be; Allah says in Sura Baqarah, Verse 276, “Allah destroys interest and gives increase for charities. And Allah does not like every sinning disbeliever.

Now let us deliberate on our topic of this article “Poverty as a self-imposed curse”. It is a non-conventional perspective. This entails describing poverty from a fresh angle hitherto ignored. The flip side of capitalism and consumerism is unwarranted increase in needs for more and more. Put it simply, greed for more is harbored in a typical consumerism. It puts the individuals and families chasing their yawning needs, while their incomes (resources) not increasing at the same rate. The result is inability to afford

continually higher and higher living standards. Consequently, an induced feeling (perception) of deprivation and inadequacy is developed in a large number of individuals and families. This follows that poverty is somewhat self-imposed curse resulting from the prevalence of extravagant culture. This warning from Allah in Sura Al Waq'ah is pertinent here. Verse "(41) As for the People on the Left: how miserable will be the People on the Left. (45) Surely they had lived before in luxury!"

However artificial, self-imposed poverty curse is a powerful influence on our individual lives and culture. It often narrows down our focus on material life alone while eclipsing other dimensions. Religion, relationships, brotherhood, empathy, sensitivity for others and above all acknowledging others' rights find no place in our lives. In short, we live and compete for our individual material gratification. In doing so, often times we undermine our health, moral values, integrity, reputation, etc. In Surah At-Takathur (102:1,2) Allah warns us of such a syndrome in these words, "Mutual Rivalry (for piling more and more wealth) distracts you; Until you (end up) reach in your graves."

Wait! The real questions are; can a person survive without abundance of material wellbeing, must a person compete for wealth, would people accept him or her if he or she does not compete for wealth, last but not the least would he or she be able to meet the ends in life: afford a comfortable living for him- or herself and family? The answer lies in exploring this saying, "Must we do as a roman doe". In fact, one needs to earn wealth for his or her survival but needs not to compete for it – *Earn to live, live not to earn*. On the other hand, pursuing the modern culture of consumerism irrationally and to the extreme has a cost: It turns societies amoral, induce wide spread inequality in the society leading to rampant corruption, causes restlessness as

greed for more increases, eclipses our religion, social values, relationships and lot more knowing that inevitably we shall leave this life and wealth behind for a permanent abode (life hereafter). Is it still worth risking our fate in the life hereafter by living this life for material greed? Let me end my arguments by quoting Allah's warning in Sura Al Baqarah, verse 268: *"Satan threatens you with poverty and orders you to immorality, while Allah promises you forgiveness from him and bounty. And Allah is all-Encompassing and all-Knowing."*

Sura Baqarah, (Verse 200 – 202) "Our Lord, give us in this world," and he will have in the Hereafter no share; But among them is he who says, "Our Lord, give us in this world [that which is] good and in the Hereafter [that which is] good and protect us from the punishment of the Fire; Those will have a share of what they have earned, and Allah is swift in account.

At the end I would say; it is my life, my opportunity and my decision!!!

Bonding Relationships

Relationships are inevitable: We all are made to live and work with people. A group of researchers unraveled that we do not work in groups for the common objective, but we work with each other to accomplish our individual objectives and in doing so we need others help. Building this culture of cooperation and interdependence is a challenge, but not for those who develop sensitivity and empathy; honest concern; and make kindness a must for them.

A person sensitive to others' limitations and concerns is better able to understand and empathize with them; a person who has honest concern for others needs and expectations is able to respond justly; and kindness towards others helps a person to go an extra mile to help others. All these qualities build trust; foster cooperation; and last but not the least, enrich relationship bond for a mutual advantage.

For the mankind example of Prophet Muhammad PBUH is the most relevant of all. In Sura Twobah [9:128] Allah says, "Definitely there has come to you a messenger [Prophet Muhammad pbuh] from among yourselves, heavy upon him is your suffering; keenly wanting your welfare; and, to Muslims he is most Kind and Merciful".

According to a prophetic tradition, there was this old woman who used to throw garbage on the prophet pbuh, every time he passed through her house. Suddenly, she stopped throwing garbage for few straight days. Prophet pbuh became concerned for her and went to her house despite her insulting behavior. Subhan Allah. This explains that he pbuh showed concern for her as a human being disregarding her behavior. We should also show sensitivity, emphasize, be concerned and kind to others as fellow human beings and should not let their beliefs and personalities stop us from doing so. Allah knows better.

Civility: Enriching Relationships

A cohesive society must conduct itself with respect for all and togetherness. Often times however, the fabric of inter-personal relations is torn by our deliberate or casual disrespectful behavior towards others. Disrespecting is like hammering a nail into a piece of wood. Even after the nail is removed, the hole remains. Same is true with disrespecting, one may say sorry but the damage remains.

*Consider the
impact of your
words before you
speak!*

Allah Al Mighty guides us in Sura Al-Hujuraat (The Dwellings) principles of respecting each other. By practicing these, we can surely build a cohesive society where everyone feels respected and valued.

Core Principles of Civility:

- Maintain harmony and peace in the society by prompt reconciliation among the two factions, when they move into conflict, unless one is oppressing the other in that case protect the oppressed.
- Trust each other and do not suspect (act with disbelief). Some kinds of suspicion are accounted for sin.
- Cover each other's social credibility and do not speak of their weaknesses or wrongs
- Do not react in haste on heresy, when a known devilish person brings news to you unless you verify it from your sources. It is good than repenting afterwards.
- Address each other with their proper names. Do not insult them by calling them with (disgraceful) nick names nor defame them.

Did I know I am Disrespectful and Miser?

There was this person who narrated his wonderful experience: He was posted as Manager in a Bank's branch. On his arrival, he was graciously greeted by the Guard of the branch. During the usual briefing session, he was, however, told that he should keep distance from the Guard as he is too rowdy and misbehaved. He naturally became confused and after spending few days in the branch, he called in the Guard and discussed as to why he carries such a bad image though he always found him well behaved. To his total surprise the Guard told him what he had to say, "Sir, the manager before you had put the call bell under his foot. When he wanted to call me, he used to push the bell with his foot. So obviously! I also used to respond to him in the same manner – rude. But you have put the bell on the table and press it with your hand, which is respectful so I also respect you".

We all are the creation of Allah. HE says in Quran, "I have created mankind in the best shape". Then if we insult each other, we would insult Allah's creation hence Allah (may HE save us from insulting Allah). Allah says in Sura Humaza, "Woe to every slanderer backbiter; Who gathers wealth and counts it over; Thinking that his wealth has made him immortal; By no means. He will be thrown into the Crusher".

Insulting others could be due to pride; Backbiting could be due to jealousy; and holding back wealth could be for a number of reasons: It will give sustenance forever; fear of becoming poor (Shaitan whispers); thinking as if one has earned it on his own and one is the absolute owner of it. Nay! but Allah gives it to whom he wills.

Allah has forbidden three acts that will put a man in hell:

- ✓ Insulting others
- ✓ Backbiting, and
- ✓ Being miser: Holding back wealth (that Allah gives) for personal gratification and not sharing with the ones who have right on us (patients, family, relatives, poor and so many alike). This also includes, putting money in speculative (non-

productive) assets to multiply wealth without contributing in the real economic activity. Allah knows better.

Satanic Legacies

Facts noted in the Quran about how Satan attacked humans are for our lessons and warnings against him. Satanic legacies are continuing since the creation of Prophet Adam PBUH., however, the manifestations have become disguised so much so that we fail to relate our sinful behavior with the satanic legacies of the past. Hence, we are unable to take lessons or see the warnings.

Some Satanic legacies that are much prevalent in our times, yet we are ignorant or naïve, are narrated below for awareness. May Allah accept this effort and may I save myself and my Muslim brotherhood from getting into Satan's Trap.

1. Satan motivated Prophet Adam and his wife Hawa PBUT, for false gains (longer life and wealth) only by disobeying Allah. The outcome of it was end of their abode in Jannah and start of worldly tribulations and worries.

Ironically, this satanic legacy continues under the disguise of Motivation for more and more; material progress, comfort and luxuries. Practically, motivation for more and more has compelled us to devote our lives towards earning money and availing comfort. Consequently, we care less of doing for the life hereafter beyond certain rituals, if at all we believe in it.

In Sura Takasur [102:1-2] Allah says, "Competition in [worldly] increase diverts you; Until you visit [enter in your] grave. Similarly, in the Sura Waqiah [56:41- 47] Allah says, "And the companions of the left - what are the companions of the left? [They will be] in scorching fire and scalding water, And a shade of black smoke; Neither cool nor beneficial; Indeed they were, before that, indulging in affluence, And they used to persist in the great violation, And they used to say, "When we die and become dust and bones, are we indeed to be resurrected?"

In the above verses Allah has warned for seeking more and more in this life: We should have faith that Allah has already taken it on Himself to provide sustenance to each one of us as much He considers deem appropriate, neither more nor less, and that we should struggle in worshipping him i.e. doing our daily life chores, whatever they may be, as per His guidance and to seek His pleasure. Later, He has foretold about the people who still seek more and more [luxuries and comforts] in this life that they will be in Hell Fire (May Allah save each of us from the Hell Fire).

2. When Prophet Mosa [Moses] PBUH along with his brother Haroon [Aaron] PBUH went to Pharaoh to invite him into Islam, he flatly refused on the suspicion that Prophet Mosa PBUH wants to take over his position and power. It is noted in the Noble Quran that he said to his people that this person (Mosa PBUH) wants to take over your nation from you: He suspected and became amongst the disbeliever.

Today many times we fail to accept truth (Haq) only because of our suspicion and fall prey to Satan.

3. In Sura Baqarah [2:268] Allah says, "Satan threatens you with poverty and orders you to immorality, while Allah promises you forgiveness from Him and bounty. And Allah is all-Encompassing and Knowing". In Sura Humazah [104:2-4] Allah says, "Who collects wealth and [continuously] counts it; He thinks that his wealth will make him immortal; No! He will surely be thrown into the Crusher".

Satanic legacy continues, despite our faith in Allah we anticipate [fear] poverty ignoring our possessions of heaps of wealth so we struggle for more and more believing that our wealth will secure our future [give to us extended

life]. In doing so, we heedlessly consider getting more and more wealth and gaining more and more power, without concern for not disobeying Allah (earning money from Haram and gaining power aggressively). Examples abound.

4. Satan began to whisper suggestions to them [Adam and Hawa pbut] in order to reveal to them their shame that was hidden from them (before): He said: "Your Lord only forbade you this tree, lest you should become angels or such beings as live forever." And he swore to them both, that he was their sincere advisor. (al-A'raaf, 20-21) [Reference Ali Ibn Omar al-Batnuni (1095) Islamic Calendar]

This legacy of Satan continues as people of our times have lost their decency under the disguise of Right to look good, Fashion and now they say, "It is my body it is my choice..."

5. In Sura Sad [38:71-73] Allah says, [mention] when your Lord said to the angels, "Indeed, I am going to create a human being from clay; So when I have proportioned him and breathed into him of My [created] soul, then fall down to him in prostration; So the angels prostrated - all of them entirely; Except Iblees - he was arrogant and became among the disbelievers; [Allah] said, "O Iblees, what prevented you from prostrating to that which I created with My hands? Were you arrogant [then], or were you [already] among the haughty? He said, "I am better than him. You created me from fire and created him from clay"; [Allah] said, "Then get out of Paradise, for indeed, you are expelled"

Satan took pride in himself and disobeyed Allah so was cursed forever. Today we disobey Allah saying that we have knowledge and power, we need no God (Allah). Likewise, even those who have faith in Allah sometimes humiliate

others (make fun of them); and, make wrong decisions all because of three alphabets [EGO].

6. A person who was the Knight of his tribe failed to accept Islam despite in his own words that he believed that Prophet Muhammad PBUH was a genuine prophet of Allah: Because he was afraid of what his people would they say (how would they respond)?

Today despite knowing, we continue to insist on the wrong doings just because of our position in the society and to conform to the culture. Put it differently, we fail to discard wrong doings from our lives just because we are afraid of people around us and the culture.

Man is Created Noble, so he should Attain Nobility!*

Do you think you would live like a commoner and succeed like a noble person? Of course not! Commoners aim for today; fulfilling their desires, pleasures, comforts and convenience. In contrast, noble persons aim for a better tomorrow. They strive in life for a high-end purpose and in doing so often times forego their today. In Sura Ash Sharh (verses 5-6) Allah says, "For indeed, with hardship [will be] ease; Indeed, with hardship [will be] ease."

We can definitely explore the fundamental differences among commoners and noble persons from many perspectives. Here, I would leverage the holy revelation – the noble Quran – to spot the decisive differences. At many places, Quran has categorically described the different characteristics of a commoner and a noble person. Let us review some of these differences that set the commoners and noble persons apart; –

- a. According to three divine religions symbolically our life in this world represents present and life hereafter represents tomorrow. According to Quran every soul shall die and be resurrected in the next life. In the back drop of this paradigm, noble persons aim for the next life (tomorrow) and whenever need be, they forego their today. In contrast, commoners focus on this life (today).
- b. In (Sura Asr) Allah describes a commoner as one who is at a loss. He says "Every person is at a loss but not the persons who accept the divinity of Allah and do righteous deeds; and enjoin truth of Islam [and

reality of life in all of its manifestations] and enjoin [sabr] hope and patience amongst each other.” Such are the persons who are the nobles – they have faith on unseen and are self-regulated.

- c. In Sura Takasur (verses 1-2) Allah further describes a commoner in the following words, “Competition for [worldly] increase diverts you; Until you go to your graves.” In contrast He describes noble persons in these words in Sura At-Twabah (Verse 111), “Indeed, Allah has purchased from the faithfuls, their lives and their properties [in exchange] for that they will have Paradise. They fight in the cause of Allah, so they kill and are killed. [It is] a true promise [binding] upon Him in the Torah and the Gospel and the Qur'an. And who is truer to his covenant than Allah? So, rejoice in your transaction which you have contracted. And it is that which is the great attainment.” This clearly describes that commoners focus and prefer worldly gains (today) over the next life (tomorrow) – they spend their entire lives chasing their unending desires; pleasure; comfort; and, convenience. While the noble persons live their lives with a high-end purpose and aim to secure their tomorrow.
- d. Allah goes further describing a commoner in Sura Al-Humazah (Verses 2-3), “Who collects wealth and [continuously] counts it; He thinks that his wealth will make him immortal.” This again explains the commoners' preference for this life (today).
- e. Allah finally in Sura Al Qasas (verses 28:83) He says, “That home of the Hereafter (Paradise) We assign to those who do not desire glory

(exaltedness) upon the earth or corruption. And the [best] outcome is for the righteous.” This clarifies that the noble persons prefer not the bounties of this life (today) over the life hereafter (tomorrow). In contrast, commoners settle for the lust of this life (today) and forego the next life (tomorrow)

- f. To conclude let us remind to ourselves that Allah says in Sura Najam (verses 30-42), “And that there is not for man except that [good] for which he strives; And that his effort is going to be seen; Then he will be recompensed for it with the fullest recompense; And that to your Lord is the finality.” Whether we live like a commoner or attain nobility depends on our intentions and actions, which shall be justly judged by Allah.

From the above, it is clear and loud that a commoner and a noble person's lives are on a different tangent. A commoner life with a vision not extending beyond this life (today); his motivation is bounded by his desires and needs; and he spends his entire life chasing desires, pleasures, comforts and convenience. In contrast, a noble person's vision extends to the life hereafter (tomorrow); his motivation has basis in commitment, responsibility and self-regulation; and he lives his life for a high-end purpose.

My readers are cautioned here that a noble person is not the one who works not for his today. He does so but with a responsibility for his future too unlike the commoner who pursues his today without thinking for his future. The following examples elaborates; -

Persons who would voluntarily drop off their education and rather start unstable careers are likely to achieve desires, pleasure, comforts and

convenience at early an age but not for very long. Such persons' opportunities become plateaued quickly but their responsibilities keep growing over time, whether they take up a job or start an enterprise.

In contrast, a person who would opt for continuing his education hence delays his career or at least full-time career is likely to attain a stable career and accomplish more in his today and tomorrow. In short, it is not the achievements one gets rather quickly but one who wisely secures his future makes him noble. A noble person lives with a difference – knowledge, conviction, perseverance, self-regulation and adherence. Look at this real-life example, “There was this person who pursued a qualification in Cost and Management Accounting alongside working at a junior position, while his colleagues opted to make little more money by doing overtime. Obviously, upon attaining the qualification he got a big jump in his career when he commenced his full-time job, while others continued working as clerks with no future guaranteed.



* Word “Man” implies men and women, both.

Note: The example I have referred to above is of a fellow management accountant, who is currently working as Director Finance in a Higher Education Institute. He has held many senior positions at international and local corporates.

